Miska

Miska – A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Tulkarm Subdistrict

Miska was a Palestinian village in the Tulkarm Subdistrict, located approximately 15 km southwest of Tulkarm on a slightly elevated sandy hill in the coastal plain, at an average elevation of about 50 meters above sea level.

The village stood along the northern bank of a wadi. Secondary roads connected it with the main road to Tulkarm and with the coastal highway. Its surrounding countryside was intensively agricultural and was particularly noted for citrus orchards, fruit trees, and numerous wells.

Miska's Palestinian inhabitants were expelled during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Haganah officers ordered them to leave on 15 April, but the

villagers refused. On 20–21 April, units of the Alexandroni Brigade attacked Miska and forcibly expelled the population.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Tulkarm
Distance from Tulkarm	Approximately 15 km southwest
Elevation	Approximately 50 m above sea level
Palestinian population, 1944/45	880
Total population of the combined 1944/45 statistical unit	1,060: 880 Arabs and 180 Jews in Miska and Sde Warburg
Estimated Palestinian population, 1948	1,021
Total land area of the statistical unit	8,076 dunums, including Sde Warburg
Order to leave	15 April 1948; villagers refused
Attack and expulsion	20–21 April 1948
Military unit	Alexandroni Brigade of the Haganah
Military context	Haganah policy of clearing Palestinian communities from the coastal belt; Palestine Remembered labels the context “Coastal Clearing”
Zionist settlements established on village land before 1948	Sde Warburg, 1938; Mishmeret, 1946

Location and Geography of Miska

Miska stood on a low sandy hill in the coastal plain along the northern bank of a wadi.

Secondary roads linked the village to the highway leading toward Tulkarm and to the main coastal road.

Much of the surrounding countryside consisted of agricultural land and orchards. Some areas had previously been wooded before being cleared and planted with

fruit trees.

Neighboring Villages and Localities

Palestinian maps and local documentation place Miska among a number of towns and villages, approximately:

- North: al-Tira, or Tira Bani Sa'b.
- South and southeast: Kafr Saba and Qalqiliya.
- Southwest: Tabsur / Khirbat 'Azzun.
- West and northwest: the area toward al-Haram, al-Tira, and the coastal plain.
- Immediately west: Ramat ha-Kovesh, founded in 1932 but not on Miska's land according to Khalidi.
- Northwest of the site: Mishmeret and Sde Warburg on land associated with Miska.

These are approximate geographical relationships and should not be treated as final cadastral boundaries.

Name and Historical Origins

Several explanations have been proposed for the name Miska.

Some historians associate it with an Arab tribe known as Miska whose members may have settled the region before or during the early Islamic period. Khalidi, however, stresses that the relationship between this tribe and the village is uncertain.

A second explanation is connected with medieval Arabic geographical literature. Yaqut al-Hamawi referred to Miska and to a celebrated variety of fruit known as the musk apple, said to have been taken to Egypt during the time of the Fatimid vizier al-Hasan al-Yazuri.

The origin of the village name therefore cannot be established conclusively as either tribal or derived from the musk-like fragrance of its fruit.

Miska in the Medieval Period

The historian al-Safadi recorded several Muslim scholars whose nisba linked them to Miska, including the grammarian and prosodist 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Miski al-Iskandarani, who died in Cairo in 1235.

Miska was also mentioned in a Mamluk endowment document issued for Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun in 1278 in connection with villages around Tira Bani Sa'b, supporting the presence of a locality with this name in the region during the Mamluk period.

The 1596 Record

Some later sources assign a population figure to Miska in 1596, but the identification requires caution.

Khalidi states that a village called Miska was recorded in the nahiya of Jabal Shami in the liwa' of Nablus in 1596, but notes that it was located at **a different site**. This article therefore does not treat that record as a secure population count for Miska of Tulkarm.

The French Campaign of 1799

French commander Jean-Baptiste Kléber and his troops passed the village on their way toward Acre during Napoleon's campaign in Palestine in 1799.

Miska in the Nineteenth Century

By the late nineteenth century, Miska was a small village with an estimated population of about 300.

Olive trees grew north and south of the village, while fig and palm trees were scattered among the houses and gardens.

Contemporary descriptions also recorded a well to the south of the village.

Built Form

Miska had a roughly square plan and was divided into four unequal sections by two streets intersecting at the village center.

New houses built during the final years of the British Mandate spread northward, away from the wadi.

A mosque and a boys' elementary school were among the principal public buildings.

Population of Miska

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 443 inhabitants in Miska, all Muslims.

By 1931, the population had increased to 635, again all Muslims, living in 123 occupied houses.

The 1944/45 statistics require careful interpretation because Miska and Sde Warburg were grouped in a single statistical unit. That unit had a total population of 1,060: **880 Arabs and 180 Jews**.

Because Sde Warburg was the Jewish settlement included in the unit, the Palestinian Arab population of Miska itself was 880.

Palestine Remembered later estimates Miska's Palestinian population at 1,021 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 6,269 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official Mandate census counts.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
Late 19th century	Approximately 300	Historical estimate
1922	443	Official census; all Muslims
1931	635	Official census; all Muslims

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
1944/45	880 Arabs	Palestinian population of Miska; the combined statistical unit also included 180 Jews in Sde Warburg, for a total of 1,060
1948	1,021	Later estimate of Miska's Palestinian population, not an official census
1998	6,269 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	123	Occupied houses recorded in the official census
1948	197	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official Mandate count

Education

Miska had an elementary school for boys.

Khalidi does not provide a securely documented founding date or a complete enrollment record for the school's final Mandate years, so no unsupported founding year or pupil total has been added.

The school later consisted of two principal rooms that survived the destruction of most of the village for decades. Palestinian community documentation records that descendants of Miska restored the building before it was demolished in 2006.

The Mosque

Miska's Muslim inhabitants maintained a village mosque.

In Khalidi's pre-1992 field description, the mosque was still standing and was being used as a storage building for hay bales and agricultural implements.

Later Palestinian community documentation records surviving remains of the older

mosque. Material uploaded in 2025 states that a newer adjoining section had been destroyed in 1948.

Village Families

Palestinian local historical documentation records families including Abu Tahoun, Abu Ghazi, al-Ashqar, al-Ballas, al-Jabr, al-Hajj Hamad, al-Zuraiqi, Harb and its branches, Khalaf, Muslih, al-Qadi, Shbayta, Zuhd, Salman, 'Abd al-Qadir, 'Amara, Nasir, Nawwas, Yasin, and al-Sa'i.

These names derive from village and family documentation rather than from Khalidi's principal entry.

Land Ownership in Miska

The combined 1944/45 statistical unit of Miska and Sde Warburg covered 8,076 dunums.

Palestine Remembered presents the simplified ownership categories as follows:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	4,924
Transferred to Zionists	2,976
Communal/Public	176
Total	**8,076**

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public: 4,924 dunums were classified as Arab land, 2,976 as Jewish land, and 176 as public land.

The official table explicitly states that these figures **include Sde Warburg**, so they should not be interpreted as a wholly separate ownership table for Arab Miska alone.

Later Palestinian historical research also discusses a much larger communal tract

known as Ghabat Miska, or the Miska forest/common. Because that historical tract does not appear as an additional separate component of the 8,076-dunum Village Statistics total, its area should not simply be added to the official figure without a cadastral and land-registry study.

Land Use in 1944/45

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Citrus and bananas	1,115	1,196	0	2,311
Plantations and irrigable land	304	83	0	387
Cereals	3,245	1,683	0	4,928
Built-up land	88	14	0	102
Non-cultivable land	172	0	176	348
Total	**4,924**	**2,976**	**176**	**8,076**

Cultivable land totaled 7,626 dunums, approximately 94 percent of the statistical unit: 4,664 Arab dunums and 2,962 Jewish dunums.

Built-up and non-cultivable land totaled 450 dunums.

This detailed breakdown corrects simplified tables that assign all 348 dunums of non-cultivable land to Palestinians. The official breakdown is 172 Arab and 176 public dunums.

Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal basis of life in Miska. The relative abundance of wells made it possible to develop extensive citrus and fruit orchards.

In 1944/45, 1,115 Arab dunums were devoted to citrus and bananas, 3,245 to cereals, and 304 to plantations and irrigable agriculture.

Villagers also cultivated vegetables, including cucumbers, as well as watermelons, olives, figs, and palms.

The village's road connections with Tulkarm and the coastal region facilitated the marketing of agricultural produce.

Water and Wells

Wells were relatively abundant in and around Miska.

They supplied domestic water and supported the irrigation of the village's citrus groves and fruit orchards.

After the Nakba, remains of structures associated with village wells continued to be identifiable, including large cement fragments from an enclosure surrounding one of the wells. Local documentation also preserves information on additional wells and public water facilities across the village lands.

Archaeological Remains

Southwest of Miska stood an archaeological mound known as **Dhahrat al-Sawwana**.

Evidence found there indicated settlement during prehistoric times.

Later Palestinian studies also refer to pottery fragments and flint tools, although the site's detailed archaeological sequence requires specialized independent study.

The Road to Expulsion in 1948

During the spring of 1948, Haganah policy increasingly targeted Palestinian communities in the coastal belt before the end of the British Mandate.

On **15 April 1948**, Haganah officers ordered the inhabitants of Miska to leave their village.

The villagers refused and remained in their homes.

Occupation and Depopulation of Miska

Several days later, on **20–21 April 1948**, units of the **Alexandroni Brigade** attacked Miska.

The attacking force expelled the Palestinian inhabitants as part of an earlier Haganah command decision to ensure the evacuation of Arab communities from the coastal region between Tel Aviv and Zikhron Ya'akov before 15 May 1948.

Palestine Remembered lists 20 April as the occupation date and labels the military context “Coastal Clearing.” Khalidi's detailed account, however, gives a 20–21 April range and does not establish “Coastal Clearing” as a formal operation name.

This article therefore uses **20–21 April 1948** for the attack and expulsion and identifies the **Alexandroni Brigade** as the village-specific attacking force.

Stage	Date	Details
Order to leave	15 April 1948	Haganah officers order Miska's inhabitants to leave; the villagers refuse
Attack on Miska	20–21 April 1948	Alexandroni Brigade units attack the village
Expulsion	20–21 April 1948	The Palestinian inhabitants are forcibly expelled
Military context	Spring 1948	Haganah decision to evacuate Arab communities from the coastal belt between Tel Aviv and Zikhron Ya'akov
Village-specific military unit	Alexandroni Brigade	The unit identified by Khalidi as attacking Miska

Destruction of Miska

The depopulation of Miska was followed by the physical destruction of the village.

In early June 1948, the Jewish National Fund began demolishing Miska together with several other Palestinian villages.

Khalidi, citing Israeli records, states that on **16 June 1948** Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion noted in his diary that the destruction of Miska was under way, while avoiding the issuance of explicit written authorization for the demolitions.

Later Palestinian local documentation states that demolition and leveling continued in subsequent years, culminating in extensive destruction of the village houses and cemetery around 1951.

The school survived much longer. Descendants of the village restored it in the mid-2000s, but the building was demolished in 2006.

Zionist and Israeli Settlements on Miska's Lands

Sde Warburg: Established in 1938 on land traditionally belonging to Miska.

Mishmeret: Established in 1946 northwest of the village site on Miska's lands.

Ramat ha-Kovesh: Founded in 1932 approximately one kilometer west of Miska but, according to Khalidi, not on village land.

Khalidi does not identify a separate new Israeli settlement founded after 1948 directly over Miska's built-up center. Large areas of the depopulated lands were instead incorporated into agricultural use, especially citrus cultivation, and into the land use of neighboring settlements.

Miska Today

In the fieldwork underlying *All That Remains*, published in 1992, Khalidi described the Miska site as covered with citrus orchards, with cactus growing along their edges.

At that time, the two-room school still stood and was used by orchard guards, while the mosque served as a storehouse for hay and agricultural implements. Large cement fragments from the enclosure surrounding a village well were also visible.

That description no longer reflects every later change. Palestinian community

documentation records that descendants of Miska restored the school in 2005 and that it was demolished in 2006. It is therefore inaccurate to describe the school as still standing in 2026.

Palestine Remembered also documents remains associated with the mosque, wells, house locations, and rubble. Material uploaded in September 2025 shows remains identified by contributors as part of the old mosque and states that a newer adjoining section was destroyed in 1948.

The upload date does not necessarily establish the date on which each photograph was taken, so this is best treated as later community documentation rather than a comprehensive architectural survey of the site in 2026.

Citrus cultivation and other agricultural use remain central to the transformed landscape described in the available documentation, while most of the original Palestinian built fabric has disappeared.

Sources

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- Palestine Remembered – later Palestinian documentation of the destruction of Miska and its school